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The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) which represents the school district leaders of CT strongly believes that no child should be subjected to bullying and that the staff of school districts should have a high degree of awareness with respect to when bullying does occur and very effective responses to such instances. For this reason, CAPSS supports effective efforts to strengthen school bullying laws.

S.B. No. 1138 has many aspects that meet this criterion. One of them is the recognition that technology has now given bullies some very effective tools for doing a significant amount of damage. This recognition is coupled with the consequent recognition that cyber bullying needs to be addressed effectively.

Another positive aspect of the bill is its emphasis on establishing and maintaining a healthy school climate. Both research and practice have revealed that the instances in which bullying takes place is directly related to the degree to which a given school has a healthy climate for the interaction of children with children, of adults with adults and of children with adults.

Three of the bill's aspects, however, are problematic because they embody an overly prescriptive one size fits all approach that can be counterproductive in terms of reaching the goal of eliminating bullying from any child's school experience.

**1. The Requirement That Each District Designate a Safe School Environment Specialist**

Obviously, there have to be accountability structures in every school district to make sure that the districts' policies and programs that address climate issues and bullying prevention matters are implemented effectively. Districts should be held accountable for doing this. How districts do this, however, should be left up to them so prescribing the establishment of a particular position is overly prescriptive and is, therefore, a hindrance to the development and implementation of a number of effective strategies to insure accountability. There are a number of effective means for insuring accountability so districts should not be restricted to one means prescribed by the State.

**2. The Prescribed Timeline for Processing Bullying Complaints**

Obviously, all complaints regarding bullying need to be addressed comprehensively and in a timely manner. Districts should be held accountable for doing this. Setting at the state level what the timeline needs to be, however, is overly prescriptive and therefore, is a hindrance to districts' ability to establish timelines that are appropriate for their situations. Those situations may well vary even within districts based on the age of the children involved and on the severity of the bullying behavior.

**3. The Prescribed Process for Establishing and Revising the Safe School Environment Plans**

All of the stakeholders in a school and school district should have a meaningful degree of involvement in the development of Safe School Environment Plans. Districts should be held accountable for developing and revising their Plans with the meaningful

involvement of all stakeholders. Setting at the state level the process by which all districts accomplish this, however, is overly prescriptive and as a result will actually hinder districts in their efforts to involve stakeholders most meaningfully. The demographics of districts with respect to social, economic and other factors vary significantly in different districts. Districts, therefore, need to be able to establish structures for stakeholder involvement in ways that are appropriate for their districts.

What CAPSS is saying on this issue is consistent with the organization's position on a number of similar issues. The State should set standards and hold districts accountable for meeting those standards. The State, however, should allow districts the flexibility that they need to develop and implement the policies and programs that have the greatest potential for meeting the State's standards.

I would be happy to discuss this with you directly.

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